

E 458

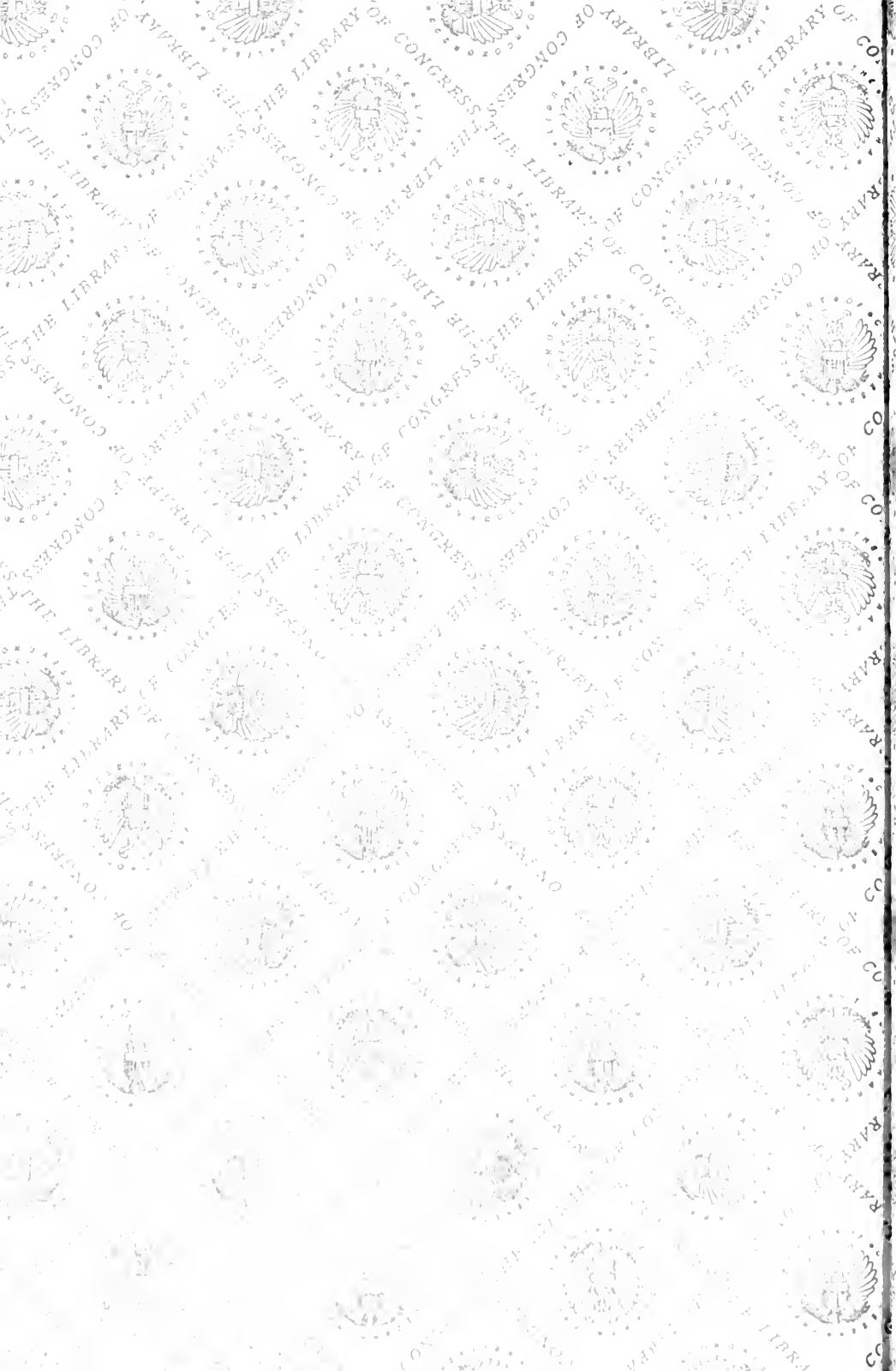
.5

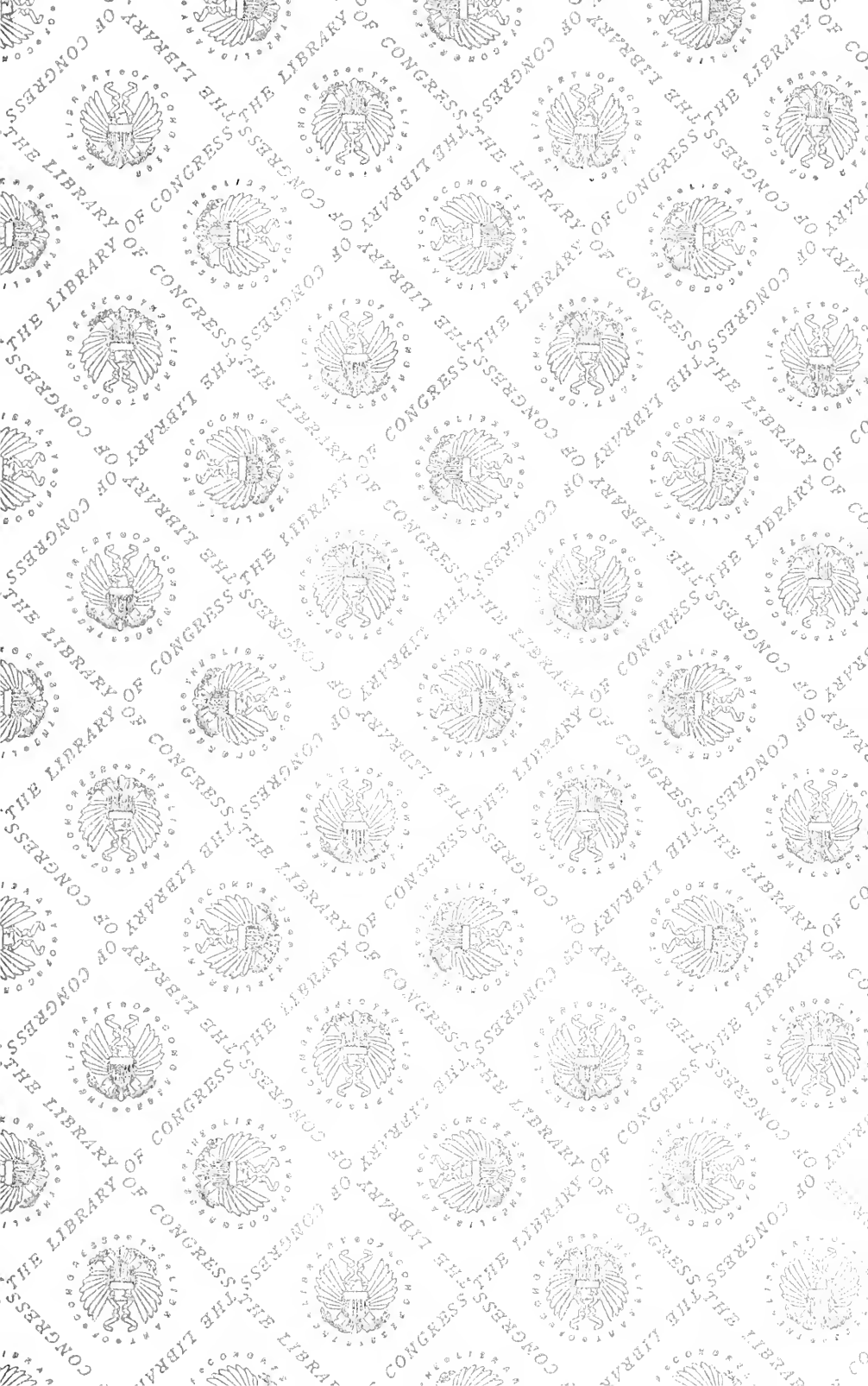
.S63

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00006141171





S P E E C H

OF

GEN. G. R. SMITH,

DELIVERED IN THE

MISSOURI STATE SENATE,

ON THE

10TH OF FEBRUARY, 1865.

2



ST. LOUIS:

M'KEE, FISHBACK AND CO., PRINTERS AND BINDERS.

1865.

S P E E C H

OF

GEN. G. R. SMITH,

DELIVERED IN THE

MISSOURI STATE SENATE,

ON THE

10TH OF FEBRUARY, 1865.



ST. LOUIS:

M'KEE, FISHBACK AND CO., PRINTERS AND BINDERS

1865.

E-158

.5

168

inc. 1921. 800.

RESOLUTION AND SPEECH
OF
GENERAL G. R. SMITH,

WHEREAS, the loyal people of this State, on the 8th day of November last, by more than forty-two thousand majority, did emphatically declare in favor of the unity of these United States and the speedy suppression of this unholy war, begun and carried on by Southern traitors and Northern sympathizers; and whereas, a large number of this latter class are known to occupy important civil as well as military offices in this State; therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, the House of Representatives concurring therein, That the Constitutional Convention, now in session in the city of St. Louis, be requested to pass an ordinance vacating all the civil offices of this city, the incumbents of which were elected or appointed previous to the 8th day of last November, and that his excellency, the Governor of this State, is hereby respectfully requested to have dismissed from any of the military offices of this State all persons who in any manner sympathized with the South in 1861, so that the rights of Union men may be secured in this Government.

MR. PRESIDENT: I have not introduced this resolution for the purpose of defining more clearly my position, nor to satisfy any one who does not know me that I am and have always been loyal, thoroughly loyal—or perhaps I ought to say “Radical;” for I believe that name is now more popular in determining the *status* of a Union man than any other, as indicated by the eagerness with which the Conservatives, of late, adopt it.

It is not long, sir—as you and every Senator upon this floor well remember—since the “Radicals” of this State were denounced by rebel sympathizers, and by every Conservative, too, as Jacobins, Red Republicans and Revolutionists; in short, the most approbrious epithets their imagination could possibly invent were poured out upon us as so many vials of wrath, in order that they might crush out the Radical party and bring us into disrepute. But, sir, a majority of more than forty thousand unconditional Union ballots given for the Radical State ticket, on the

8th day of last November, has, strangely enough, produced an astonishing change in the conduct at least, if it has not in the *opinions*, of our Conservative brethren. Why, sir, we are now regarded as an honorable party, and still more wonderful to relate, an honest and patriotic party, deeply impressed and absolutely desirous of protecting, unimpaired, this glorious inheritance of Liberty and Union, bequeathed us by our fathers. Daily, sir, we hear of some astonishing conversion from Conservatism to our ranks; and occasionally a spirit more daring than its fellows leaps at a bound from out of the depths of infamy and treason to the height of glory in the Radical party.

But, although my party is advancing so rapidly in favor with the multitude, I have not introduced this resolution to advance a single personal claim or to manufacture one jot of political capital. My position, Mr. President, as far as I am known, is, and always has been, well understood; I have nothing to make and nothing to lose by the present avowal of my opinions. So long and so intimately have I been connected with the Radical party, that its glory is in part mine, and no ungrateful hand could, if it would, wrench it from me; nor can I evade its responsibilities, but if ever its day of shame shall come—and come it may—I shall enter into the shadow of its red mantle without a murmur.

One principle, Mr. President, and one alone, prompts me; that, sir, is to correct an outrage,—such an outrage as every Union man in Missouri will bear me out in saying has been and is to-day a disgrace—a burning shame—a damning outrage—upon the Union party, most reluctantly and grievously borne by us ever since this unholy and iniquitous war was forced upon our Government by a bloated and effete aristocracy.

Go where you may, throughout this State—and I understand the same facts exist in every other State—and you will find in all the departments of Government, either civil or military, in many, very many—perhaps a majority—of the offices incumbents, clerks, or employees, who were known rebels or rebel sympathizers in 1861, and who are now only ostensibly loyal through self-interest, “that thrift may follow fawning.” And now, Mr. President, I appeal to Senators upon this floor—I implore them—to give this subject their serious consideration. Shall this condition of things

longer exist, without an effort at reform? I am not bold in declaring what is on the lips of every truly loyal man, that this class of officials cast the weight of their office and their personal influence on the side of treason. Yielding obedience to the letter of law, they violate its spirit. Fawning about the Goddess of Liberty, they conceal a poisoned dagger for her bosom; drawing rich nourishment from the breast of their country, they would behold her character prostituted, her beauty blighted, her strength departed; and as the monster Nero fiddled in hellish glee while Rome burned, they would in fiendish triumph gloat over the ruin of this great Republic.

Do they never declare for the rebellion?—equally reticent are they in behalf of our Government. Do they no build bon-fires over rebel successes?—they are alike stoical when a Union victory electrifies the heart of the nation? Does our Government find it necessary to encroach upon the ancient and heretofore recognized rights of the South, (rights no longer, however,) with what “holy horror” do these hypocritical pharisees roll their eyes Heavenward, and shudder for the fate of the blessed “chivalry!” But when civilization is outraged, as at Fort Pillow, Lawrence and Centralia, and when the scalping knife of the guerrilla is seen all over our devoted State—when flags are at half mast, and a black pall is upon our land and we miss our Lyons, our Bakers, our McPhersons, and our thousands of other noble dead; what one of these galvanized Union men was ever known to recoil from such barbarism, or propose a monument to the departed great? Be not deceived. Remember Price’s last raid. Their hearts are deceitful above all else, and desperately wicked.

Mr. President, during the continuance of this rebellion men of this stripe cannot be—ought not to be—trusted in office. No one can faithfully serve two masters at the same time, even though both be after the manner of his liking; much less can he love the one and serve the other.

Sir, the duty of every American citizen is at war with neutrality toward this rebellion, and obliges him to lend the energies of his heart and hand to its suppression. He must be more than as a stranger to its interests; he must be its *active enemy*. This is the service every citizen owes his Government; and it is absolutely impossible and incompatible with a single emotion of love

or sympathy for treason. Every officer under our Government is in duty bound to wield all the power in his hands against the traitors who are striving to blot out our nationality. But in perfect accord with the principles implanted in our organization by our Creator, it is out of the power of any one who loves or sympathizes with the cause of the traitors to rise to the fullness of this duty. Why, then, I ask, are men of doubtful loyalty, and others of known disloyalty, permitted to occupy place and power? "The battle is not always to the strong," but often to the vigilant; "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

Grant, however, that thus burdened we can still outride the storm. Is it wise? Is it just? These are important questions that the members of this body cannot consider too gravely. Is not rebellion, in a bad cause against a humane Government, a serious crime? Can a nation let crime go unpunished with impunity? Is disloyalty a virtue, with a virtuous claim upon the patronage of the Government against which it has raised the fratricidal hand? Can any Government afford to disregard devoted loyalty and offer a premium for treason? Before being thus merciful, is it not wise to know that it is safe to be unjust?

Mr. President, I here pronounce the practice of employing anti-Government and anti-Administration men in Government service as foul injustice. It builds a golden bridge for the return of traitors to allegiance. So long as this is the policy and practice of our Government, treason will be easy and a traitor in good repute. Proper Government places citizenship, with all its manifold blessings, out of the reach of rebels.

Sir, there is one fact known to us all that makes the practice against which this resolution militates especially obnoxious. It is this: Throughout our whole State there are thousands of men whose loyalty breathes the spirit of martyrdom, whom this war has reduced to penury and unspeakable suffering, and whose wives and daughters eke out a miserable existence, supporting themselves by drudgeries hitherto unknown to them. Let your eyes sweep over our prairies, our valleys and our hills, and see the desolated condition of our State; behold the thousands of solitary chimneys, charred monuments testifying in their mournful solitude that here was once the abode of a family who lived in comfort, perhaps in affluence, guiltless of treason, therefore broken up,

scattered, beggared—nay, more, their fathers, husbands and sons, in many cases, murdered; their bones lie unburied upon the soil they loved so well; their crime was devotion to the Government their fathers bequeathed them.

Let us deal thoughtfully and kindly with those who remain. Go west and southwest of my home, through what may be appropriately termed the Valley of Death. Occasionally may be seen a farm house still standing, the farm unmolested, the family still in peace. Nine cases out of ten that family are rebels—a father or son, perhaps, in the rebel army. And now, sir, I appeal to the good sense of this Legislature in behalf of these long oppressed, down-trodden, suffering loyalists. Through refining fires and sore trials of revolution they have remained true and faithful to this glorious Union. Is it right that they should go needy while the wealth of the Government is lavished by thousands, nay, millions, upon those who were armed rebels or rebel sympathizers in 1861, and who are now only loyal so far as self-interest and oaths constrain them. If wrong, (and I honestly believe we are), in the name of that God who has so long scourged us for our sins, let us do right; let patriots be rewarded and traitors punished.

On the 8th day of last November the Radical Union party took possession of this State and entered upon its control. Its destiny, for weal or woe, is in our keeping. Two of the departments of the Government are now under the control of the Radical party. As one of that party, I am free to declare that, as we are to be responsible for its administration, that administration should be in its own hands. I am aware that in ordinary times this could not be; but now it so turns out that the people, in convention assembled, have the power to do all that is necessary for the safety and prosperity of the State. I would not have the offices referred to in the resolution now before us vacated for my party's sake, except to secure the good of this great State. I believe in no other way can we so effectually protect our citizens and secure harmony in all the departments of State. I believe we owe it, in justice, to the long-suffering Unionists of the land; I believe it richly merited by those upon whom it may fall. With traitors I have no fellowship, and desire none. I know no grades in loyalty. "He who is not for us is against us;" and here, Mr. President, I

do most solemnly declare, that so far as my acts as a legislator are concerned, I will vote for no bill or resolution that accords to traitors or sympathizers with treason equality with loyalists. They may return to some of the privileges of citizenship, but must be content with an humble position. They have, by their own act, forfeited every right once enjoyed in our Government, and no act of mine shall restore them again to the proud title of American citizens. I may forgive the erring, beardless boys, not fully citizens ere they became traitors, but not now; no, sir, not now. Born and educated as I was, in what has been known in common parlance as "the South," and all my associations and teachings "South"—never having so much as visited a free State previous to this rebellion—I know well how adroitly, cunningly and designedly the poison of sectional prejudice has been instilled into the minds of our youth. Therefore it is that I can make some allowance for them; but not yet. They must do penance for a season, that they may fully appreciate the proud declaration, "I am an American citizen."

Mr. President, in further justification of the resolution under consideration, let me very briefly refer to some of the results of this unholy war.

In the spring of 1861, just previous to the outbreak of this rebellion, our State was never in so prosperous a condition. Her wealth was founded upon the most productive agriculture; her commerce was daily enlarging its dominions; her manufactures were advancing to place and influence; her mountains of iron, her beds of other minerals and coal, enough to supply the demands of the whole world, were being rapidly developed; her railroads progressing rapidly to completion; her universities, colleges, seminaries and schools were filled with the youth of the country; her churches, for the worship of the only true and living God, were increasing in numbers and influence; every branch of industry met a profitable and rich reward. In a word, all was peace, contentment and happiness. But in an evil hour, an ambitious and unscrupulous Governor issued his proclamation for fifty thousand troops to make war against the General Government. No grievance was complained of—none could be specified. The citizens of Missouri had received from that Government nothing but kindness; they had abundant cause to be

grateful—none whatever for enmity. But O, ingratitude! stronger than traitors' arms. I need not hesitate to tell the truth; the world knows our dishonor. With pain and mortification we must confess that thousands of our citizens responded to the call of the arch-traitor, and locked bayonets in deadly strife with those who, for their country, "dared to do and die."

From thence dates the work of death and devastation. Union men were tortured and shot in the presence of their wives and children. Many of us were compelled to leave our homes and seek safety among strangers for our lives, our only crime being devotion to that Union our fathers had bequeathed, "as a rich legacy unto their issue." I will not attempt to depict, if I could, the horrors that ensued and are still perpetrated upon Union men. You all know them. Did every wrong have a tongue, the melancholy story of violence and blood, and "bitter, burning wrongs we have in our heart's cells shut up," must still go unrelated. Now, as the bloody tragedy seems drawing to a close, what is the condition of our State, so prosperous when first her peace was broken by the clangor of arms? Our people have been wantonly murdered, robbed and driven from the State; our agricultural, mechanical, commercial and mineral interests lie prostrate; our railroads torn up, bridges burned, and we unable to re-build them; our universities, colleges and schools abandoned and ruined; our children uneducated and ignorant; our asylums for the unfortunate of our race despoiled, robbed, and the unfortunates multiplied; our churches are become hospitals for the sick and wounded of this war, and we have no more Sabbaths; our people are ruined by taxation, and the cry for bread is heard in our land; the farmer is still shot down at his plow, and armies are still eating out our substance.

Mr. President, this is but a glimpse of the long train of evils entailed upon our people by this most foul and unnatural rebellion of an unprincipled set of slaveholders and their minions, to extend the area of human slavery. They have dishonored the hitherto unsullied name of American; they have crushed the prosperity of the commonwealth; they have plunged millions of honest people into the depths of earthly miseries, and cast upon our people, for generations to come, the burden of oppressive taxation. And why, sir, have they done these things? Only that the strong

might oppress the weak ; only that one race of a common humanity might break in pieces the image of God in another, and crush out the virtue of the hearts of millions of their fellow creatures. Does not the blood of our murdered brothers cry to us for vengeance ? And is not vengeance meet when mercy rewards crime ? Does not posterity call to us from the bosom of the future to guard them against a curse like ours, by affixing a penalty to treason that shall for all time be a terror to traitors ? Is it urged that those at whom this resolution is directed were but slightly hostile, and but partially culpable. I answer, the punishment proposed is exceedingly light, and far less than they deserve. It only requires them to descend from places they hold, against the will of the people, as expressed by an overwhelming popular verdict at the last election, and return to more humble spheres, in atonement for ungenerous treatment of misplaced confidence and betrayal of their country.

I believe the resolution a judicious one, and that the great mass of the Union party of Missouri desire its passage. I urge upon their representatives here not to disappoint them, but by their unanimous approval, apply to the State Convention, and to his excellency, the Governor, to execute the behest it embodies. I have said what I have in its favor from no personal motive ; although, in common with others, I have felt the heavy hand of oppression. Not my own wrongs, but the wrongs of my countrymen and my country constitute my sole apology for so long occupying the time of the Senate.

God grant that the fiat this resolution invokes may go forth. Then, and not till then, will Missouri be redeemed. Then, indeed, Mr. President, and not till then, will we enter upon the glorious future that awaits us.

